

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

In re OPTIONABLE SECURITIES  
LITIGATION

No. 07 Civ. 3753 (LAK)

**MEMORANDUM OF LAW IN SUPPORT OF MOTION OF RAMESH M. SINGA FOR  
APPOINTMENT AS LEAD PLAINTIFF AND APPOINTMENT OF LEAD COUNSEL**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

Pursuant to Section 21D(a)(3)(B) of the Securities and Exchange Act of 1934 (the “Exchange Act”), as amended by the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995 (“PSLRA”), 15 U.S.C. § 78u-4(a)(3)(B), and for the reasons set forth below, Ramesh M. Singa (“Movant”) respectfully moves this Court for an Order appointing him Lead Plaintiff on behalf of himself and all others similarly situated who, between September 27, 2005 and May 14, 2007, inclusive (the “Class Period”), purchased or otherwise acquired securities of Optionable Inc. (hereinafter “Optionable” or the “Company”) and incurred damages as a result of the Defendants’ violations of the federal securities laws. Movant also seeks appointment of the law firm of Cohen, Milstein, Hausfeld & Toll, P.L.L.C. (“Cohen Milstein”) as Lead Counsel.

A number of complaints have been filed in this Court against Optionable for violations of Sections 10(b) and 20(a) of the Exchange Act and Rule 10b-5. These complaints (the “Related Actions”) are predicated on the Company’s understatement, throughout its history, of its dependence on BMO Financial Group (“BMO”), also known as Bank of Montreal.

Movant suffered losses<sup>1</sup> of approximately \$146,607.30 during the Class Period as a result

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<sup>1</sup> The losses suffered by Movant, as detailed herein, are not the same as legally

of Defendants' misleading conduct. Movant is unaware at this time of any other movant with a greater loss. Thus, under Section 21D of the Exchange Act, Movant is presumptively the "most adequate plaintiff" and should be appointed as lead plaintiff because he has "the largest financial interest in the relief sought by [the] class." 15 U.S.C. § 78u-4(a)(3)(B)(iii)(I)(bb). Movant is represented in this action by Cohen Milstein, which is seeking appointment as lead counsel and is eminently qualified to prosecute securities class action claims such as this one.

## II. BACKGROUND

The Related Actions allege that Optionable and certain of its officers and directors (collectively, "Defendants") violated the Securities and Exchange Act of 1934 as a result of Defendants' false and misleading statements and omissions, which artificially inflated the price of Optionable's stock during the Class Period, causing harm to Optionable's investors.

Optionable provides natural gas and other energy derivatives trading and brokerage services to brokerage firms, financial institutions, energy traders, and hedge funds. The Related Actions allege that throughout Optionable's history, the Company understated its dependence on BMO, or Bank of Montreal. In its latest quarterly report, Optionable stated that BMO accounted for approximately 30% of its revenues during the three-month period ended March 31, 2007. BMO, however, actually accounted for approximately 60% of the Company's potential revenue. Moreover, the Company failed to tell investors that its business with BMO was tied intimately to David Lee ("Lee"), a natural gas trader at BMO. Unbeknownst to investors, Lee had a close

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compensable damages, measurement of which is often a complex legal question that generally cannot be determined at this stage of the litigation. The approximate losses can, however, be determined from the executed certification required under Section 27 of the Securities Act and based upon reference to information concerning the market for Optionable securities. *See* Declaration of Catherine A. Torell in Support of Motion of Ramesh M. Singa ("Torell Decl."), at Ex. B.

personal relationship with executives at Optionable, including Defendant Kevin Cassidy, the company's Vice Chairman and CEO. According to reports, Lee's trading alone in the first quarter of 2007 amounted to \$2.73 million, or 30% of Optionable's revenue.

On April 27, 2007, BMO issued a press release announcing that its mark-to-market commodity trading losses were estimated to be between \$350 million and \$450 million (pre-tax) in the second quarter of 2007, due in part to positions held by BMO in the energy market which were negatively impacted by changes in market conditions. Upon this news, shares of the Company's stock fell \$1.45 per share, or almost 21%, to close at \$5.56 per share after investors recognized that BMO accounted for 24% of the Company's revenues in 2006.

On May 8, 2007, BMO issued a statement announcing that it was suspending its business relationships with Optionable, as well as all derivatives trading through the Company, pending the results of an external review of its commodity trading losses. In response to this news, the price of Optionable stock declined precipitously, falling from \$4.64 per share to \$2.81 per share – a decline of approximately 40% – on heavy trading volume.

Shares of the Company's stock continued to decline as investors learned that: (i) NYMEX Holdings, Inc. ("NYMEX") had resigned its board representation of Optionable; (ii) Cassidy had resigned as Vice Chairman and CEO; and (iii) Cassidy served time in prison for a felony conviction on credit card fraud in 1997 and for income tax evasion in 1993.

### **III. ARGUMENT**

As discussed below, Movant satisfies each of the requirements of the PSLRA and is therefore qualified for appointment as Lead Plaintiff. Additionally, Movant seeks appointment of Cohen Milstein as Lead Counsel for the Class.

**A. Movant Satisfies the Procedural Requirements For Appointment as Lead Plaintiff**

Section 21D of the Securities Act, 15 U.S.C. § 78u-4, establishes a procedure for the appointment of a lead plaintiff in “each private action arising under the [Securities Act or Exchange Act] that is brought as a plaintiff class action pursuant to the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.” 15 U.S.C. § 78u-4(a)(1). First, the plaintiff who files the initial action must publish a notice to the class within 20 days of filing the action, informing class members of their right to file a motion for appointment as lead plaintiff. 15 U.S.C. § 78u-4(a)(3)(A)(i). The first such notice here was published on May 11, 2007 (*see* Torell Decl., Ex. A).

The PSLRA further provides that within 90 days after the publication of the notice of pendency, or as soon as practicable after the actions have been consolidated, the Court shall consider any motion made by a class member and “shall appoint as lead plaintiff the member or members of the purported plaintiff class that the court determines to be most capable of adequately representing the interests of class members.” 15 U.S.C. § 78u-4(a)(3)(B)(i).

The 60-day time period provided by the PSLRA in which applications for appointment as lead plaintiff must be filed expires on July 10, 2007. Movant has moved within the statutory 60-day time period. The motion contains the required certifications setting forth, *inter alia*, Movant’s transactions in Optionable securities during the Class Period, and indicates that Movant has reviewed a complaint filed in the Action and is willing to serve as a representative party on behalf of the Class. *See* Torell Decl., Ex. B. In addition, Movant has selected and retained competent and experienced counsel, as set forth in counsel’s resume. *See* Cohen Milstein resume at Torell Decl., Ex. C. As noted in the resume, the firm has developed an excellent reputation for successfully prosecuting federal securities law claims.

**B. Movant Satisfies the Legal Prerequisites For Appointment as Lead Plaintiff**

**1. Movant is Presumptively the Most Adequate Plaintiff**

The PSLRA sets forth procedures for the appointment of a lead plaintiff in class actions brought under the Exchange Act. 15 U.S.C. § 78u-4(a)(1). The PSLRA provides that this Court: shall appoint as lead plaintiff the member or members of the purported plaintiff class that the court determines to be most capable of adequately representing the interests of class members (hereafter in this paragraph referred to as the “most adequate plaintiff”) in accordance with this subparagraph.

15 U.S.C. § 78u-4(a)(3)(B)(i). In adjudicating this motion, the Court must be guided by a presumption that the most adequate plaintiff is the person or group of persons who (a) filed the Complaint or made a motion to serve as lead plaintiff, (b) has the largest financial interest in the relief sought by the class, and (c) otherwise satisfies the requirements of Fed. R. Civ. P. 23 and 15 U.S.C. § 78u-4(a)(3)(B)(iii)(I). This presumption may be rebutted by proof that the presumptively most adequate plaintiff “will not fairly and adequately protect the interests of the class” or “is subject to unique defenses that render such plaintiff incapable of adequately representing the class.” 15 U.S.C. § 78u-4(a)(3)(B)(iii)(II).

Movant satisfies each of these requirements. During the Class Period, Movant suffered losses of approximately \$146,607.30 from his purchase of Optionable securities.<sup>2</sup> Movant believes he has the largest financial interest in the relief sought by the Class. Further, Movant is willing to actively participate in the leadership of this litigation through both personal involvement and consultation with his chosen counsel.

Moreover, because Movant possesses a significant interest in the outcome of this litigation, he is presumed to be the “most adequate” plaintiff. 15 U.S.C. § 78u-

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<sup>2</sup> A copy of Movant’s certification is attached to the Torell Decl. as Exhibit B.

4(a)(3)(B)(iii)(I)(bb). Movant is both qualified to represent the class and willing to serve as a representative party. In addition, Movant has selected counsel that is highly experienced in prosecuting securities class actions such as this one. Accordingly, Movant satisfies the requirements for appointment as Lead Plaintiff under the PSLRA and the instant motion should be granted.

## **2. Movant Satisfies The Requirements of Rule 23**

In addition to requiring that the lead plaintiff have the largest financial interest, the PSLRA requires that the lead plaintiff must “otherwise satisf[y] the requirements of Rule 23 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.” 15 U.S.C. § 78u-4(a)(3)(B)(iii)(I)(cc); *see also In re Elan Corp. Sec. Litig.*, 2002 WL 31720410, at \*3 (S.D.N.Y. Dec. 3, 2002); *Albert Fadem Trust v. Citigroup Inc.*, 239 F. Supp. 2d 344, 347 (S.D.N.Y. 2002). Rule 23(a) requires that (1) the class be so numerous that joinder of all members is impracticable; (2) there be questions of law or fact common to the class; (3) such claims be typical of those of the class; and (4) the representatives fairly and adequately protect the interests of the class. Fed. R. Civ. P. 23(a). Typicality and adequacy of representation are the only provisions relevant to the determination of lead plaintiff under the PSLRA. *In re Crayfish Co. Sec. Litig.*, No. 00 Civ. 6766 (DAB), 2002 WL 1268013, at \*4 (S.D.N.Y. June 6, 2002) (citing *In re Olsten Corp. Sec. Litig.*, 3 F. Supp. 2d 286, 296 (E.D.N.Y. 1998) and *Weltz v. Lee*, 199 F.R.D 129, 133 (S.D.N.Y. 2001)).

The typicality requirement of Fed. R. Civ. P. 23(a)(3) is satisfied where “the claims or defenses of the representative parties are typical of the claims or defenses of the class.” Fed. R. Civ. P. 23(a)(3). A “claim will meet the typicality requirement if ‘each class member’s claim arises from the same course of conduct, and each class member makes similar legal arguments to prove the defendants’ liability.’” *Olsten*, 3 F. Supp. 2d at 296 (quoting *In re Drexel Burnham*

*Lambert Group, Inc.*, 960 F.2d 285, 291 (2d Cir. 1992)); *see also Fields v. Biomatrix, Inc.*, 198 F.R.D. 451, 456 (D.N.J. 2000). The typicality standard is met even where minor distinctions exist. *Id.* As one court noted: “The premise of the typicality requirement is simply stated: as goes the claim of the named plaintiff, so go the claims of the class. Complete identification between the claims constituting each individual action is not required.” *Chisholm v. Transouth Fin. Corp.*, 184 F.R.D. 556, 563 (E.D. Va. 1999). The typicality requirement is plainly satisfied in the instant case, where Movant seeks the same relief and advances the same legal theories as other class members.

The adequacy of representation requirement of Rule 23(a)(4) is satisfied where it is established that a representative party “will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the class.” Fed. R. Civ. P. 23(a)(4). Representation is adequate when “(1) class counsel is qualified, experienced and generally able to conduct the litigation; (2) the class members do not have interests that are antagonistic to one another; and (3) the class has a sufficient interest in the outcome of the case to ensure vigorous adequacy.” *Weltz*, 199 F.R.D. at 133 (citing *Olsten*, 3 F. Supp. 2d at 296).

Movant is an adequate representative for the class. Movant purchased Optionable securities during the Class Period and, like other putative class members, suffered a loss in the form of the diminution of value in the price of his Optionable stock. Moreover, Movant has retained counsel highly experienced in prosecuting securities class actions vigorously and efficiently, and has timely submitted his choice to the Court for approval pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 78u-4(a)(3)(B)(v).

**C. The Court Should Appoint Cohen Milstein as Lead Counsel**

The PSLRA vests authority in the lead plaintiff to select lead counsel, subject to approval



by the Court. 15 U.S.C. § 78u-4(a)(3)(B)(v). Thus, a court should not disturb the lead plaintiff's selection of counsel unless such interference is necessary "to protect the interests of the class." 15 U.S.C. § 78u-4(a)(3)(B)(iii)(II)(aa). Movant has selected Cohen Milstein to serve as Lead Counsel, and appointing Cohen Milstein as Lead Counsel would be prudent to protect the interests of the class.

As detailed in its firm resume,<sup>3</sup> Cohen Milstein has extensive expertise and experience in the field of securities litigation and has successfully prosecuted numerous securities fraud class actions and obtained excellent recoveries on behalf of defrauded investors. Thus, the Court may be confident that the class will receive the highest caliber of legal representation in full compliance with the mandates of the PSLRA. *See* 15 U.S.C. § 77z-1(a)(3)(B)(v); *Albert Fadem Trust*, 239 F. Supp. 2d at 348 (approving as lead counsel law firm with "substantial experience and success in prosecuting securities fraud actions").

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

Based on the foregoing, Movant respectfully requests that the Court: (i) appoint him as Lead Plaintiff; (ii) appoint Cohen Milstein as Lead Counsel; and (iii) grant such other relief as the Court may deem to be just and proper.

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<sup>3</sup> A copy of Cohen Milstein's firm resume is attached to the Torell Decl. as Exhibit C.



Dated: July 10, 2007

Respectfully submitted,

COHEN, MILSTEIN, HAUSFELD  
& TOLL, P.L.L.C.

/s/ Catherine A. Torell  
Catherine A. Torell (CT-0905)  
150 East 52<sup>nd</sup> Street, Thirtieth Floor  
New York, New York 10022  
Telephone: (212) 838-7797  
Facsimile: (212) 838-7745

- and -

Steven J. Toll  
Daniel S. Sommers  
S. Douglas Bunch  
1100 New York Avenue, N.W.  
West Tower, Suite 500  
Washington, DC 20005-3964  
Telephone: (202) 408-4600  
Facsimile: (202) 408-4699

*Attorneys for Ramesh M. Singa and  
Proposed Lead Counsel for the Class*